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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY Palestine

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SUBJECT Plans for the Enlargement of the
Arab Higher Executive

DIST. 13 December 1946

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SUPPLEMENT

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1. Ever since the formation of the present Arab Higher Executive at the Bludan session of the Arab League in June 1946, the Executive has been constantly under fire for mainly two reasons:

- (a) Not being representative of all Arab parties and organizations, and
- (b) For having been formed arbitrarily by the Arab League and not by the Palestine Arabs themselves.

2. This attitude of criticism and hostility was well appreciated by the members of the Executive. In fact, it is generally acknowledged that, had it not been for frequent trips to Alexandria where the members would meet under the Mufti's chairmanship, the Executive would have hardly been able to carry on because of the lack of confidence and support of the other leaders and the people in general.

3. It appears that the Mufti himself indicated that a broader and more representative composition of the Executive was desired, and that particularly a body, formed by the people themselves and not by the League, was indispensable. Such a body would make possible the inclusion of representatives of other parties, who are at present causing embarrassment to the Executive by their inactive and critical attitude.

4. Although the enlargement of the Executive and its expansion to make it more representative of Palestine Arabs generally has long been recognized, no plan to accomplish this purpose has yet been finally approved, even for suggestion to the Arab League. Among plans reliably reported to be under consideration are the following:

Inclusion of representatives of all political parties:

As has previously been pointed out, the present Executive does not have party representatives as such. The Executive is composed of two representatives of Jamal al-Husayni's former Arab Higher Committee and two of the Arab Higher Front. The Reform, Defense, Youth, National Bloc, and Istiqlal Parties are not represented.

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- (b) Inclusion of representatives of labor and peasant elements: The Palestine Arab Workers Society and the Arab Labor Conference (both non-political labor unions) wield considerable influence through their younger and energetic leadership. In like manner, the Arab Rural Conference, representing fellahin interests, appears to be increasing in number and influence, and, having for long suffered political neglect, might likely be represented, should the enlargement of the Executive take place.
- (c) Inclusion of Leftist elements: The Communists are likely to win representation in the person of Dr. Khalil Budayri, representative of ideological communism, and in the more extreme and active League of National Liberation and the League of Educated Arabs.
- (d) Inclusion of prominent Arabs now in exile: The following political exiles are mentioned locally as possible additions to the enlarged Executive. Though they will not be able to take up residence in Palestine, they have considerable following, mostly as the Mufti's men, and may be expected to exercise considerable influence on the policy of the Executive, should such an inclusion materialize:

Ishaq Dargwish, former Director of Arabic Schools and the Mufti's close companion;
Akram Zu'aytar, Arab youth leader;
Sheikh Hasan Abd-al-Saud, the Mufti's former aide;
Rassem Khalidi, former Registrar of Cooperative Societies and a youth leader, also close to the Mufti;
'Izz al-Din al-Shawwa, former District Officer (Palestine Government position) and lately in the service of King Ibn Saud;
Munif al-Husayni, former editor of the now defunct newspaper al-Liwa; at present secretary to the Mufti.

5. Another plan, described by Emile Ghuri as being under active consideration, is the enlargement of the Executive to include twenty members, seven of whom would be expected to devote their entire time to the work of the Executive. He mentioned the following as being likely candidates for the active positions:

The Mufti
Jamal al-Husayni
Emil Ghuri
Dr. 'Issat Tanus, ex-secretary of the Arab Higher Committee
Sami Taha, represents Palestine Arab Workers Association on AUC
Dr. Khalil Budayri

The remaining members would meet regularly at intervals of about a month to act as consultants for establishing policy and advising on procedure.

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6. Jamal al-Husayni is very reliably reported to have said that the work of the Executive had bogged down because only the four members selected by the Arab League are active. Ahmad Hilmi Pasha said his time was fully occupied by the affairs of his bank (the Arab National Bank), and Dr. Husayn Khalidi has been engaged in the building of an Arab hospital, funds for which were donated by one of his late relatives, which has taken an increasing amount of his time. This has left the affairs of the Executive in the hands of Jamal al-Husayni and Emil Ghuri, both of whom are leaders of the Palestine Arab Party. Critics and opponents of this Party quite naturally charge the Executive with playing party politics, this criticism being centered largely in the Arab youth, who are showing signs of drifting to the left. Jamal al-Husayni said that the active membership of the Executive should be increased and that there should be a consultative assembly to meet every month or every two months. While no definite number was mentioned by him, thirty was proposed, and he did not deny it. He added that this assembly should include representatives of every Arab organization with political aims. In general, his conversation followed along the lines suggested by Emil Ghuri as being one of the plans under consideration.

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Comment: It must be remembered, however, that the Arab Higher Executive was created by the Arab League when the Palestine Arabs could not agree among themselves as to representation. It was formed to give the League a body to consult with regard to the Palestine question. It is virtually without any powers of its own, and any action involving changes in the present organization and functions would be subject to the League's approval and concurrence. It is hardly likely, however, that the League would refuse to recognize any representative body if the Arabs of Palestine can agree among themselves as to its constitution.

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